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ABSTRACT

To examine colonial American press coverage of the British court decision to free American slave James Somerset, a study was conducted to clarify why the decision worked as a victory for British abolitionists but was usually cited even in post-Revolution America in the passage of increasingly oppressive slave legislation. Twenty-three of the thirty-two regularly publishing newspapers of 1772 were selected for survey. The extent of coverage was ascertained by determining the number of insertions each paper devoted to the story during the trial period and by counting the total number of words given to the story in these insertions. Because of the colonial editors' tradition of transcribing verbatim British press accounts, completeness of coverage was determined in large part by word count. On a colony by colony basis, it was found that readers in the areas surveyed could be as well informed as readers of most British papers. For example, the "Boston Gazette" provided only 42 words on the story, while its rival, "The Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter," devoted some 2,700 words to it, including trial coverage and opinion papers. Since the patriotic press saw its duty as inflaming rather than informing the public, the findings suggest that coverage of the Somerset trial manipulated colonial fear of racial equality as a way of providing yet another reason colonists should seek separation from Great Britain. (CRH)

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# Colonial Newspaper Reaction to the Somerset Decision

by

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# Colonial Newspaper Reaction to the Somerset Decision

The role the patriot press played in fostering the American Revolution has been frequently explored. Arthur M Schlesinger has written: "From the inception of the controversy the patriots exhibited extraordinary skills in manipulating public opinion, playing upon the emotions of the ignorant as well as the minds of the educated."[1]

Schlesinger and others have discussed how the press exploited, and to a degree defined, those events we most connect to the Revolution -- the Stamp Act, the Townshend Duties, the Boston Tea Party. What has not been so thoroughly explored, however, is the role the colonial

press played in molding public opinion on the most sensitive of issues: slavery.

Traditionally, historians have been apologists for the lack of abolitionist fervor among the founding fathers. Rossiter, for example, wrote: "The mark of hypocrsy must not be stamped too impetuously upon the philosophers of the Revolution, for slavery was an inherited fact of infinite complexity that most of them looked forward confidently to ending in a generation or two."[2] Some new scholars are critical of this traditional approach. Berlin and Hoffman write: [T]he failure of scholars until recently to focus attention on the black experience and the seminal role of slavery during the formative period of the American nation is difficult to explain. But one thing is clear -- for too many years, historians were parties to the compromise of the founding fathers."[3]

Journalism historians can join the roster of historians who are taking a new, critical look at the issue of slavery and the Revolution by an examination of the colonial newspaper. Did the view expressed in the patriot press, for example suggest the founding fathers expected slavery to end in a "generation or two?" Did the patriot press attempt to mold public opinion on the subject of slavery as it did in other areas? And, most importantly, does an examination of the patriot press indicate pro-slavery thought was an impetus in the Revolution?

It is the purpose of this paper to examine colonial press coverage of a British court decision to free the American slave James Somerset as an avenue of exploration to these broader questions. The study was also designed to clarify why the decision worked as a victory for abolitionists in Great Britian, but in America, even after the Revolution, was most usually cited in the passage of increasingly oppressive legislation.

Somerset was an African who was sold in Virginia to Charles Stewart, who transported the slave with him to England in 1769. In England, Somerset escaped; Stewart ordered him seized and forced on board a ship bound for Jamaica where he was to be sold.

The incident came to the attention of Granville Sharp, the British abolition leader who had been seeking a definitive case to test the legality of slave-holding in Great Britain. Sharp arranged for Somerset to sue for his freedom. The case came to trial in May and June of 1772 before Lord Mansfield in the Court of the King's Bench. Five lawyers had been assembled by British abolitionists to argue the case for Somerset. Counsel for the defendant was underwritten by a group of planters from the West Indies, who, like the abolitionists, believed the decision would have far-ranging consequences.

After testimony on five separate days in a courtroom packed with planters, abolitionists and black Somerset supporters, Mansfield ruled Somerset must be "discharged," although not on the basis that slavery was illegal in England, as the abolitionists had argued. Instead, Mansfield's judgment was made on the narrow base that Great Britain had no precedent allowing for the forced re-capture of an escaped slave. One British press account, subsequently reprinted in many colonial newspapers, quoted Mansfield's final, specific statement.

> So high an act of dominion was never in use here; no master was ever allowed to take a slave by force to be sold abroad, because he had deserted from his service, or for any other reason whatsoever. We cannot say the cause set forth by this return is allowed or approved by the laws of this kingdom, therefore the man must be discharged. [4]

Despite such press accounts, it was popularly believed in Great Britain that the decision had ended slavery in England. Lord Mansfield was quickly celebrated as England's Great Emancipator, a myth that continues to be promulgated today in some British textbooks,[5] although modern British scholars increasingly have emphasized the narrowness of the decision and have made efforts to debunk the myth, pointing to the chief justice's subsequent support of the slave owner in the infamous Zong case.[6] Modern American historians--those few who have addressed the decision at all--have been concerned its influence on fugitive slave legislation.

Despite their different focuses, British and American scholars agree that confusion has existed in the interpretation of the case from the time of the trial to the present day. One American historian has partially addressed the question of interpretation of the decision in America. Nadelhaft blames the colonial press for American confusion, claiming colonial newspapers such as the Boston Gazette "explicitly misinformed"[8] the public. Nadelhaft believes it was the Gazette's interpretation that came to dominate American understanding of the decision.

This study was designed to clarify how the colonial press treated the Somerset case. Three areas were chosen for assessment: (1) The extent of coverage (2) the completeness and accuracy of coverage and (3) the patterns of coverage as related to the political stances of the newspapers.

Method:

Thirty-two newspapers were regularly publishing in the American colonies in 1772.[9] Twenty-three newspapers were selected for the survey. Those eliminated were the newspapers that do not have sufficient surviving editions to examine. One foreign language newspaper was omitted.

The extent of coverage was ascertained by determining the number of insertions each paper devoted to the story during the trial period and by counting the total number of words given to the story in these insertions. The results are summarized in Table 1.

Completeness of coverage can also be assessed to a large degree by word count as those newspapers that devoted many words to the story tended to include in their coverage the most complete and accurate versions of the story. Those newspapers with few words had a corresponding lack of completeness. This trend can be explained by the colonial method of collecting and presenting foreign news. As journalism historians recognize, colonial editors used British periodicals for their major source of British news. Editors frequently received more than one British periodical. It was traditional procedure for editors to transcribe the British press accounts verbatim to their own pages, frequently including all the versions available. It was usual for the editor not to re-write any of the various versions, even to save space. If an editor ran out of space, the remaining portion of the story might be set in a smaller type to make it fit. Sometimes the story would be held over for the next edition. Occasionally, the final paragraphs of the story might be dropped, although this practice was not helpful to the colonial reader since news stories of the time were written in a chronological style and could sometimes lose meaning if the final paragraphs were eliminated.

Although colonial editors generally did not re-write foreign news, editors could exercise considerable control

in the bias of the story's presentation by the manipulation of these traditional procedures. As stories were written chronologically without expectation of cutting, the elimination of any portion of the story could influence how the story was interpreted. In addition, the colonial editor might select a particular version of the trial from a favorite periodical and ignore other versions. The colonial editor could also choose to ignore the main body of coverage in a British periodical, instead selecting what journalists today would call a "sidebar" to tell the story. At a time when formal channels of news were not plentiful, British newspapers and their American counterparts freqeuntly used hearsay and gossip in their news columns, items that appeared as "an extract from a Letter" or "one correspondent observes."

The Boston Gazette, the newspaper Nadelhaft cites as misinforming its readers on the Somerset decision, used this latter method to cover the trial for its readers. Although many words were available, the Gazette selected a 42-word item:

> A correspondent observes, that as Blacks are free now in this country, Gentlemen will not be so fond of bringing them here as they used to be, it being computed there are now about 14,000 blacks in this country.[10]

Word count alone, however, was not the only method used to assess completeness and accuracy. Although the Virginia Gazette ran a moderate number of words on the case

compared to other newspapers, its coverage included a version based on observation of the trial. Nadelhaft cites this version of the story as being a correct rendering of the trial verdict:

> Yesterday, the Court of King's Bench gave judgement in the Case of Somerset the Negro, finding that Mr. Stuart, his Master, had not Power to compel him on Board a Ship or send him back to the Plantations, but that the owner might bring an Action of Trover against anyone who shall take the Black into his Service. A great number of Blacks were in Westminister Hall to hear the Determination of the cause and went away greatly pleased.11

Thus, three assessments were made to determine completeness of coverage. Table 2 ranks the newspapers in terms of words in column one and notes in column two if some of the coverage included at least one insertion based on trial coverage. Column three on that table notes whether a conclusion was presented in the coverage based on trial stories rather than on assumptions found in the short "sidebar" items.

The political orientation of the newspapers has been indicated by P (Patriot), T (Tory) or, in one case, I (Independent) on both tables. The newspapers were so classified according to their allegiance during the Revolution. But it needs to be strongly stated that in 1772 a number of newspapers that eventually aligned themselves with the Patriot cause had not done so at that time. The New Hampshire Gazette, for example, is considered a patriot newspaper, but journalist historians know that prior to the Revolution the newspaper was strongly

criticized by the Whigs because of what they saw as its pro-Tory stance. Hugh Gaine's New York Weekly Mercury was Tory in the Revolution, but is not so easily classified in the years prior to the war. There is no difficulty, however, in classifying the political stance of other newspapers, particularly the most fervid of the patriot newspapers such as the Boston Gazette, the Massachusetts Spy, the New York Journal, the Pennsylvania Journal, the Pennsylvania Packet and the Pennsylvania Chronicle.

Results:

Extent of coverage: On a colony-by-colony basis, readers in the areas surveyed could be as well-informed as readers of most British newspapers. Although the Boston Gazette provided just 42 words on the subject, its rival, the Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter devoted 2,700 words to the subject, giving its readers not only trial coverage, but also various short paragraphs of opinion on the decision as well -- altogether, most of what was available from the British press.

No one paper adequately covered the trial in South Carolina, but if the accounts in all of the newspapers are considered, complete coverage was available to the South Carolina reader who read all the local papers.

The Somerset story, however, did not play a large role in any of the newspapers when compared to other stories of the

day. The foreign news story that received the most words concerned the queen of Denmark, King George III's sister, Princess Caroline, who was accused by Danish insurgents of having an affair with the court physician and plotting to overthrow the king, her husband. From April to October, thousands of words were taken from the British press and printed in the foreign news columns of colonial newspapers. Even Junius, the celebrated British essayist who was widely published in the colonies for his pro-American viewpoint, devoted a long piece to the story, suggesting the king had not properly protected his sister's honor. Interest in the story apparently crossed all political lines, for even the Boston Gazette, which tended not to include stories about the royal family unless they were vituperative, kept its readers apprised of the latest developments.

Local stories also took precedence over Somerset, although Draper's traditional News-Letter published a supplement in which the Somerset story was given prominent play.[12] Otherwise, the Somerset case was simply included in the closely-packed paragraphs of foreign news usually found on the second and third pages of the newspapers.

Completeness of coverage. Table 2 suggests the strong correlation between the number of words devoted to the story and the newspaper's completeness and accuracy as determined by the paper's use of the trial stories.

Political patterns. The rankings of the newspapers in Table 2 appear to break into three parts: the bottom eight, those with the least coverage, anchored by Gaine's Mercury and Edes and Gill's Boston Gazette; a middle group clustered around Thomas and John Fleet's independent Boston Evening Post; and the highest group topped by Richard Draper's eventually Tory Boston News-Letter.

Out of the bottom eight, six of the newspapers are clearly patriot organs, even in 1772. The poorest coverage in terms of accuracy and extent was provided by the most patriotic organ of all, the Boston Gazette, edited by one of the original members of the Sons of Liberty, Benjamin Edes. The second-poorest coverage was provided by Isaiah Thomas' Massachusetts Spy, a newspaper that rivaled the Gazette for its fiery radicalism. Moreover, William Goddard's Chronicle, William Bradford's Pennsylvania Journal and John Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet were all newspapers whose editors played important roles as patriot propagandists before and during the Revolution. Hugh Gaine's Mercury is also in this bottom group and may be best explained in terms of Gaine's idiosyncratic editorship. Gaine's career suggests his political ideals were most dependent on what he viewed as the most advantageous winds flowing through his pocketbook.

The top group, the newspapers that gave the Somerset decision the fairest and most complete coverage, includes most of the newspapers that were to be associated with the Tory camp. Both Margaret Draper, who edited the News-Letter after her husband's death, and Robert Wells of the South Carolina and American General Gazette fled to England during the Revolution. The editor of the Boston Post-Boy, John Green, was the only member of the famous Green printing family to side with the Loyalists during the Revolution. Other newspapers in the top group, although eventually becoming Patriot, were of a conservative cast. The traditional character of the New Hampshire Gazette has already been mentioned. Samuel and Ebenezer Hall of the Essex Gazette are remembered as respected printers more than fiery Patriots; similarly so John Carter of the Providence Gazette. The South Carolina Gazette, an articulate patriot organ during the Revolution under the editorship of Peter Timothy was, in 1772, under the caretaking supervision of Thomas Howell during Timothy's illness. Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette was for years criticized by Virginia Whigs for what they considered its Tory sympathies; in 176, the Whigs, led by Thomas Jefferson, invited William Rind to establish an opposition Virginia Gazette. (This newspaper was not included in the study because no copies of the paper have survived from May to October of 1772.)

The middle group of newspapers tends to be composed of those newspapers that were not early leaders in the revolutionary cause. Solomon Southwick of the Newport Mercury, however, was a strongly patriot editor in the Revolution. The ranking of his paper in this middle group may suggest that it was necessary for the newspaper to serve the informational needs of his readers who may have included members of Rhode Island's anti-slavery movement as well as readers involved in the colony's substantial slave interests.

It is signficant that the paper almost exactly in the middle of the ranking on Table 2 was published by the Fleet brothers, editors who believed strongly enough in the impartial tradition of newspaper publication that they chose to shut down their newspaper at the commencement of hostilities rather than continue a newpaper that could no longer perform in that manner.

Colonial reaction. The study was designed to note the newspapers that contained colonial discussion of the case. However, only one newspaper, the Fleets' Boston Evening-Post, contained comment from colonial readers that specifically made reference to the case. An exchange of letters on the subject of slavery appeared in the New-London Gazette in August and September, and a strong anti-slave letter appeared in the Salem Gazette in August. Although those letters to the editor do not mention the case directly, the case may have

stirred the comment.

In the exchange of letters that appeared in the Boston Evening-Post both the anti- and pro-slavery writers mention the Somerset decision. The exchange began in early September by a pro-slavery writer, John Marsham, who argued that slavery is part of God's plan. He was challenged by another correspondent who also refers to Somerset:

> I am glad to see that the highest court of common law at hom (of which Mr. Marsham speaks so slightingly has shown in a late singular case of Stewart and Somerset the Negro, that will allow no species of slavery, particularly so glaringly a one, to be used there; and I hope this glorious precedent will extend, in time, its agreeable and salutary way, to America and the West Indies. [13]

The exchange extended until the end of the year, the discussion taking up thousands of words as both correspondents wrote in letters averaging two thousand words each.

Conclusions: The first conclusion to avoid is to suggest that the editors of the newspapers that gave Somerset the broadest coverage were any more anti-slavery than those editors who provided less coverage. Many printers, Patriot and Tory, occasionally sold slaves, several owned slaves and slave advertisements characterize most colonial newspapers. The Quaker printer, Isaac Collins, who published abolitionist tracts, did not publish a newspaper during this period.

The broad coverage provided by newspapers in the top of the rankings suggest that their editors were still influenced by the colonial printing tradition of impartiality. Impartiality,

first articulated by Benjamin Franklin in the Pennsylvania Gazette in 1731, was the practice of publishing most of what came to hand on a particular subject, even on both sides of the issue. The practice meant the printer did not have to take on a judgmental role, thus freeing him or her from any difficulties that a position on a controversial issue could entail. Finally, by offending no one, impartiality was intended to keep the presses busy.[14] The strength of the impartial tradition has been frequently underrated. Its final demise did not occur until the outbreak of war.

Led by the Boston Gazette, the patriot newspapers had broken with this tradition. Whig-influenced newspapers only printed those stories the editors considered helpful to the Whig cause. Thus, the limited coverage of the Somerset decision by mostly patriot newspapers may indicate that the slavery issue had become politically sensitive to editors who espoused the patriot cause.

Undoubtedly, by 1772 the slavery issue had become a political liability in the colonial argument for more self-government. The patriot rhetoric emphasizing language such as "enslavement," "tyrannical" and "oppression" only pointed up the difficulty of of calling for an end to British oppresion while continuing to practice colonial oppression. As a colonial agent in London, Benjamin Franklin had found that the existence of slavery in the American colonies tended to discount American claims for increasing

independence. Franklin focused on this problem in a letter to London's Public Advertiser in 1770. In his letter, which Franklin wrote in the form of a dialogue, the Ameican was asked to comment on Granville Sharp's anti-slavery book. The American, under Franklin's pen, answered:

> I applaud the Author's Zeal for Liberty in general. I am pleased with his humanity. But his general Reflections on all Americans as having no real regard for Liberty; as having so little Dislike of Despotism and Tyranny, that they do not scruple to exercise them with unbounded Rigour over their miserable Slaves, and the like, I cannot approve of; nor of the conclusion he draws, that therefore our claims to the Enjoyment of Liberty for ourselves is unjust. 15

The problem of slavery for the Patriots may be summed up in Franklin's final phrase. No matter how much Patriots blamed the British for the slave trade, the existence of slavery in the colonies and its acceptance by most colonists considerably weakened the patriot call for liberty. In this context, the Somerset decision could only complicate the dilemma. If the patriot press gave the case major attention, Patriots would have placed themselves in the position of applauding the action of Great Britain and the frequently villified Lord Mansfield -- hardly the temper of the times. Such attention would also have run the risk of offending some colonists -- particulary those who were Patriots and slave owners.

Franklin coped with the Somerset dilemma by refusing to take a defensive posture. He chose to ignore the popular understanding of the decision -- perhaps less for accuracy's sake than because the narrow interpretation allowed for attack. He wrote to the Public Advertiser:

> Pharsical Britain, to pride thyself in setting free a single Slave that happens to land on thy coasts, while they merchants in all thy ports are encouraged by thy laws to continue a commerce whereby so many hundreds of thousands are dragged into a slavery that can scarce be said to end with their lives since it entailed on their posterity. 13

Franklin's choice of pronouns was deft. It may well have served as a reminder to British abolitionists that the American colonies had a vigorous anti-slavery movement in the work of the Quakers. It was a misleading technique, however; the Quakers had established no voice in revolutionary propaganda, having withdrawn from direct participation in politics some twenty years before.

Like Franklin, the patriot press needed to find a way to explain Somerset that would not be detrimental to the patriot cause -- either by drawing attention to the lack of abolitionist thought in the revolutionary movement or, as important, by offending slave-owning Patriots. The study suggests that the patriot press found its answer by covering the story selectively, its usual technique of choosing only those items that would work to separate the American colonies from Great Britain. Thus, the patriot press avoided the complete and generally accurate versions available in the trial versions in favor of the short pieces of opinion that emphasized the decision in its widest implications -- blacks were free in the Mother Country. Why the patriot press

chose to emphasize the broad interpretation (by failing to include the trial coverage) may be in part explained by recent work offered by Afro-American scholar F. Nwabueze Okoye.

Okoye contends that much of the Patricts' zeal was fueled by their refusal to be treated in a servile way, the status they they connected to the treatment of black people in the colonies. The language of slavery so frequently used in patriot rhetoric was not accidental, he claims, but rather represented a fear that Great Britain would treat the Colonies as colonists treated their slaves. "The outrage of the colonists," Okoye writes, "stemmed from their conviction that only black people in America were deserving of servile status."[17] Thus, the "great fear" of colonists, according to Okoye, "was equality of status with enslaved blacks."[18]

Within this context of the time, the content of the short pieces used by the patriot press can be seen to touch a colonial nerve of terror. Using Okoye's thesis, the casual phrase used by the Boston Gazette, "As Blacks are now free in this country," could hardly have reached a sympathetic audience in the colonies, north or south, because few colonists could escape the bombardment of evidence presented to them in the colonial press, as elsewhere, that blacks were a sub-species of white humanity. The Gazette, for example, could proclaim on its front page of February 4, 1772, that "All

Mankind is equally free by nature," and carry an advertisement for "A Negro Child -- To Be Given Away Free" on its back page the following week. To colonists, the phrase, "As Blacks are now free in this country," could likely have been interpreted as confirmation of their worst fears -- and an indication that abolitonists could gain strength in the Colonies, as they obviously had in Great Britain, particularly if backed by the precedent of a legal decision from the Mother Country. Such an interpretation would clearly serve the Gazette's goal of widening the gulf between the American Colonies and the parent country.

The threat of equality spreading from Great Britain to her colonies was also likely to support concomittant fears of rape and revenge, subjects that were regular fare for colonial newspaper readers. On July 2, during the period of Somerset coverage, John Holt's New York Journal contained a lengthy account of the attack of a slave upon his master and the slave's execution. Since the attacking slave was locally owned, the dangers of manumission undoubtedly loomed particularly close to Holt's readers.

Holt's three references to the trial contain one trial-based story; an unimportant one, however, having to do with a postponement. But Holt's readers do learn that the case is not to be dismissed lightly "as this was thought by the court a very important decision, it was postponed 'till towards the end of the term." [19]

> The late decision with regard to Somerset the Negro a correspondent assures us, will occasion a greater ferment in America (particularly in the islands) than the Stamp Act itself; for slaves constituting the great value of (West Indian) property (especially) and appeals from America in all cases of a civil process to the mother country, every pettifogger will have his neighbor entirely at his mercy, and by applying to the King's Bench at Westminister leave the subject at Jamaica or Barbadoes wholly without a hand to cultivate his plantations. 19

The third reference reports the trial decision, but without presenting trial testimony. Instead, Holt chooses a anecdotal, "sidebar" approach.

> The great Negro cause was determined a few days ago, and the consequence was that the Negro obtained his freedom. The poor fellow was present in the court at the decision, as were likewise a great many blacks, all of them, as soon as Lord Mansfield had delivered the opinion of the court, came forward, and bowed first to the Judges, then to the bar, with the symptoms of the most extravagant joy. Who can help admiring the genius of that government which thus dispenses freedom all around it? No station or character is above the law, nor is any beneath its protectiion. The Monarch and the Beggar are alike subject to it. "Pauperum Taberna Requique Torres" are equally guarded by it. 20

Although obviously written by a sympathetic observer, the piece may not have been read in the spirit in which it was written, particularly in light of the local attack of a slave on his master; indeed, the

tone may have served to raise the ire of colonists who would not likely admire "the genius of a government" that placed the white slaveowner on the same legal footing as his black slave. Instead of increasing colonial sympathy to the plight of the slave, such an item could have easily indicated to Holt's readers how far the Mother Country had grown from her American colonies.

If Okoye is correct in his thesis, readers of the Pennsylvania Chronicle would have been disturbed by a short item. "On Monday near 200 Blacks, with their ladies, had an entertainment at a public house in Westminister,"[22] readers learn as part of William Goddard's short coverage of the case that included the Boston Gazette item. For many colonial readers the idea of blacks with their "ladies" -- not the "wenches" of the colonial press advertisements -- drinking at a public house like white people (and even affording the five shillings at the door) clearly could arouse a nightmare spectre of racial equality. Three weeks after this item, Chronicle readers are reminded about the dangers of equality in an account of a West Indian "mulatto"who attacked a white man and was quickly executed -- "staked to iron crows and burnt."[23]

This, then, was the pattern of the patriot press coverage of the Somerset decision: stories that played upon the darkest fears of the American colonists. It is not likely that the pattern of coverage occurred accidentally.

As Schlesinger has pointed out, there is little doubt that the patriot press saw its role to inflame rather than inform. The Somerset coverage suggests the patriot press manipulated the colonial fear of racial equality as a way of providing yet another reason for colonists to seek separation from Great Britain.

Table 1 - Extent of Coverage

| CONNECTICUT | Insertions | Total Words |
|---|---|---|
| Connecticut Journal and New-Haven Post Boy (P) (Thomas and Samuel Green, pubs.) | 5 | 530 |
| Connecticut Courant (P) (Ebenezer Watson, pub.) | 1 | 688 |
| New-London Gazette (P) (Timothy Green, pub.) | 3 | 742 |
| MARYLAND | | |
| Maryland Gazette (P) (Anne Catherine Green, pub.) | 4 | 877 |
| MASSACHUSETTS | | |
| Boston Evening-Post (I) Thomas and John Fleet, pubs.) | 2 | 850 |
| Boston Gazette Benjamin Edes and John Gill) | 1 | 42 |
| Massachusetts Spy (Isaiah Thomas, pub.) | 2 | 110 |
| Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter (T) (Richard Draper, pub.) | 4 | 2711 |
| Massachusetts Gazette and Boston Post-Boy (T) (John Green and Joseph Russell, pubs.) | 3 | 2600 |
| Essex (Salem) Gazette (P) Samuel and Ebenezer Hall, pubs.) | 4 | 2600 |
| NEW HAMPSHIRE | | |
| New Hampshire Gazette (P) | 5 | 1723 |

Table 1 -

| NEW YORK | Insertions | Total Words |
|---|---|---|
| New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury (T) (Hugh Gaine, pub.) | 1 | 42 |
| New York Journal (P) John Holt, pub.) | 3 | 325 |
| PENNSYLVANIA | | |
| Pennsylvania Gazette (P) (David Hall, pub.) | 1 | 750 |
| Pennsylvania Journal (P) (William Bradford, pub.) | 1 | 550 |
| Pennsylvania Packet (P) (John Dunlap, pub.) | 2 | 259 |
| Pennsylvania Chronicle (P) (William Goddard, pub.) | 2 | 160 |
| RHODE ISLAND | | |
| Newport Mercury (P) (Solomon Southwick, pub.) | 2 | 870 |
| Providence Gazette (P) (John Carter, pub.) | | |
| SOUTH CAROLINA | | |
| South Carolina and American General Gazetteer (T) (Robert Wells, pub.) | 2 | 1200 |
| South Carolina Gazette (P) (Timothy Howell, pub.) | 1 | 1400 |
| South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal (P) (Charles Crouch, pub.) | 3 | 700 |
| VIRGINIA | | |
| Virginia Gazette (Alexander Purdie and John Dixon pubs.) | 5 | 1055 |

Table 2 - Completeness of Coverage

| | Total Words | Trial Coverage | Trial Conclusion |
|---|---|---|---|
| Boston News-Letter (T) | 2711 | Yes | Yes |
| Boston Post-Boy (T) | 2600 | Yes | Yes |
| Essex Gazette (P) | 2600 | Yes | Yes |
| Providence Gazette (P) | 2360 | Yes | Yes |
| New Hampshire Gazette (P) | 1723 | Yes | Yes |
| South Carolina Gazette (P) | 1400 | Some | No |
| South Carolina and American General Gazetteer (T) | 1200 | Some | No |
| Virginia Gazette (P) | 1055 | Some | Yes |
| Maryland Gazette (P) | 877 | Some | Yes |
| Newport Mercury (P) | 870 | Some | No |
| Boston Evening-Post (I) | 850 | Some | Yes |
| Pennsylvania Gazette (P) | 750 | Some | No |
| New-London Gazette (P) | 742 | Some | No |
| South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal (P) | 700 | Some | Yes |
| Connecticut Courant (P) | 688 | Some | No |
| Pennsylvania Journal (P) | 550 | Some | Yes |
| Connecticut Gazette (P) | 403 | Some | No |
| New York Journal (P) | 325 | | No |
| Pennsylvania Packet (P) | 259 | No | No |
| Pennsylvania Chronicle (P) | 160 | No | No |
| Massachusetts Spy (P) | 110 | No | No |
| Boston Gazette (P) | 42 | No | No |
| New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury (T) | 42 | No | No |

Notes

1. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Prelude to Independence The Newspaper War on Britain 1764-1776 (New York: Knopf, 1958), p. 20.
2. Clinton Rossiter, The Political Thought of the American Revolution (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), p. 231.
3. Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds., Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution (Charlottesville: U.S. Capitol Historical Society by the University Press of Virginia, 1983), p. xi.
4. Gentleman's Magazine, July, 1772.
5. John Langdon-Davies, ed., The Slave Trade and Abolition (London: Jackdaw Publications, 1982), p. 5.
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